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Office of  
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# Selected Speeches and News Releases

March 2 - March 9, 1989

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# News Releases

U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Information

## USDA RELEASES COST OF FOOD AT HOME FOR JANUARY

WASHINGTON, March 3—Here is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's monthly update of the weekly cost of food at home for January 1989:

### Cost of food at home for a week in January 1989

	-----Food plans----- (In Dollars)			
	Thrifty	Low-cost	Moderate cost	Liberal
Families:				
Family of 2 (20-50 years)	43.60	54.90	68.00	84.60
Family of 2 (51 years and over)	41.20	52.70	65.10	78.20
Family of 4 with preschool children	63.30	78.90	96.70	118.80
Family of 4 with elemen tary schoolchildren	72.60	92.70	116.20	140.10
Individuals in four-person families:				
Children:				
1-2 years	11.40	13.90	16.20	19.50
3-5 years	12.30	15.10	18.70	22.40
6-8 years	15.10	20.00	25.10	29.30
9-11 years	17.90	22.80	29.30	33.90
Female				
12-19 years	18.60	22.40	27.20	32.90
20-50 years	18.80	23.40	28.50	36.60
51 and over	18.60	22.70	28.10	33.70
Males:				
12-14 years	18.70	25.80	32.30	37.80
15-19 years	19.40	26.70	33.20	38.50
20-50 years	20.80	26.50	33.30	40.30
51 and over	18.90	25.20	31.10	37.40

USDA's Human Nutrition Information Service computes the cost of food at home for four food plans—thrifty, low-cost, moderate-cost, and liberal.

James T. Heimbach, Ph.D., acting administrator of the Human Nutrition Information Service, said the plans consist of foods that provide well-balanced meals and snacks for a week.

In computing the costs, USDA assumes all food is bought at the store and prepared at home. Costs do not include alcoholic beverages, pet food, soap, cigarettes, paper goods, and other nonfood items bought at the store. "USDA costs are only guides to spending," Heimbach said. "Families may spend more or less, depending on such factors as where they buy their food, how carefully they plan and buy, whether some food is produced at home, what foods the family likes, and how much food is prepared at home. "Most families will find the moderate-cost or low-cost plan suitable," he said. "The thrifty plan, which USDA uses to set the coupon allotment in the food stamp program, is for families who have tighter budgets. Families with unlimited resources might use the liberal plan."

To use the chart to estimate your family's food costs:

- For members eating all meals at home—or carried from home—use the amounts shown in the chart.

- For members eating some meals out, deduct 5 percent from the amount shown for each meal not eaten at home. Thus, for a person eating lunch out 5 days a week, subtract 25 percent, or one-fourth the cost shown.

- For guests, add 5 percent of the amount shown for the proper age group for each meal.

Costs in the second part of the chart are for individuals in fourperson families. If your family has more or less than four, total the "individual" figures and make these adjustments, because larger families tend to buy and use food more economically than smaller ones:

- For a one-person family, add 20 percent.

- For a two-person family, add 10 percent.

- For a three-person family, add 5 percent.

- For a fiveor six-person family, subtract 5 percent.

- For a family of seven or more, subtract 10 percent.

Details of the four family food plans are available from the Nutrition Education Division, Human Nutrition Information Service, USDA, Federal Building, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

Johna Pierce (301) 436-8617

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## OXYGEN SHORTAGE CITED IN POULTRY HEALTH PUZZLE

WASHINGTON, March 6—A shortage of oxygen in the body caused by rapid growth appears to be a major cause of a poultry disease, ascites, a U.S. Department of Agriculture scientist has found. The nation's broiler industry was worth \$6.78 billion in 1986. "The birds are growing faster than their cardiopulmonary systems can provide needed oxygen for their bodies," said Donald A. Witzel, a veterinary physiologist for USDA's Agricultural Research Service. Witzel works at the Veterinary Toxicology and Entomology Laboratory, College Station, Texas.

Deaths from ascites account for 4 to 5 percent of mortality in affected U.S. poultry flocks, but can go as high as 50 percent, Witzel said in the February issue of Agricultural Research magazine.

Surviving birds are unmarketable, causing even greater losses to the nation's broiler industry. "If they don't die, even if they reach a good market weight, they'll be condemned by the meat inspectors at slaughter," he said.

Ascites also is a very serious problem for the broiler industry in the high altitudes of Mexico and South America. But it has intensified in the past decade within the U.S. broiler industry as producers have accelerated the production process to rush birds to market.

Witzel tested the role of oxygen deprivation in ascites by dividing 45 week-old Hubbard broiler chicks into three groups and growing them in highaltitude chambers. One group spent five weeks last summer in a chamber simulating oxygen availability at an altitude of 9,500 feet above sea level.

The second group lived in oxygen like that available at an altitude of 8,000 feet and the third breathed oxygen equivalent to that at 6,500 feet above sea level. "For every bird with ascites at the 6,500-foot level, there were two at the 8,000-foot level and six at the 9,500-level," Witzel said in the article. "And at six weeks old, the chicks in the 9,500-foot altitude chamber weighed about 19 ounces less than the same age birds we'd grown normally as a control group."

Witzel said he will continue to search for other factors that may contribute to ascites, such as viruses or tainted feed. "In the long term, the solution may be to breed poultry lines where the cardiovascular system develops more rapidly or has greater oxygen-carrying capacity than it has now," he said. "Perhaps birds could be bred to have a larger heart."

The article also reports on other ARS poultry health research under way, including the search for a vaccine against coccidiosis, a disease estimated to cost poultry producers more than \$200 million a year in slowed growth, lost feed efficiency and loss of the yellow skin color favored by some consumers.

Sandy Miller Hays (301) 344-4089

Issued: March 6, 1989

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## **USDA PROPOSES REVISION OF U.S. GRADE STANDARDS FOR BUTTER**

WASHINGTON, March 6—The U.S. Department of Agriculture has proposed to reduce penalties for brittleness, or “short body,” listed in its butter-grading standards. “Short body” was introduced as a criterion in the butter-grading standards more than half a century ago because brittle butter does not spread well, said J. Patrick Boyle, administrator of USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service. “Modern butter-packaging technology has reduced the significance of the defect,” he said.

The proponent of the revision, the American Butter Institute, claims that modern commercial packaging processes greatly reduce any significant brittleness butter might have before packaging, and so the brittleness factor should be less of a penalty when grading the product in bulk form.

One cause of brittle butter is high melting point (or hard) butterfat in cream, the result of the influence of certain feeds on a cow’s metabolism. Another cause is breed, since certain dairy cow breeds are more prone to producing hard butterfat. Certain manufacturing processes, especially those producing an unusually low curd (residual buttermilk) content, also could make butter brittle, Boyle said.

Proposed revisions to the “short body” standard would:

- eliminate the 1/2-point penalty for “slight short”;
- reduce the 1-point penalty for “definite short” to a 1/2 point;
- introduce a new category of penalty, “pronounced short,” to be penalized 1 point.

Based on the desired absence of defects, butter grading utilizes a scale of penalties ranging from zero to two, with intermediate ranges gauged in



1/2-point markdown values termed “disratings.” “Short body” is one of a long list of properties considered for disrating by butter graders. Major categories of the list are body, color and flavor. For butter to make USDA “AA” grade, it can have no more than a 1/2 disrating for the entire list.

The proponent says the proposed set of disratings for “short body,” especially the new “pronounced short” penalty, would certainly discourage production of any butter that would come to the table brittle, Boyle said.

The proposals will appear as a proposed rule in the March 7 Federal Register. Comments, received no later than April 5, should be sent to the Dairy Division, AMS, USDA, Rm. 2750-S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456.

Clarence Steinberg (202) 447-6179

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## **RENTAL RATES FOR THE 8TH CRP SIGNUP ANNOUNCED; 9TH SIGNUP SET**

WASHINGTON, March 6—Secretary of Agriculture Clayton Yeutter today announced that the maximum acceptable rental rates (MARRs) by pool for the eighth signup for the Conservation Reserve Program which ended Feb. 24, will be the same as for the seventh CRP signup.

CRP pools have been established by area based on similar erosion rates, crop production levels, and other agricultural criteria.

Bids that exceed the applicable pool MARR will not be accepted. Even if a bid is within the applicable MARR, it will not be accepted if the local Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Committee determines that the per acre bid for that farm exceeds the local prevailing rental rate for an acre of comparable land.

Yeutter said that while the U.S. Department of Agriculture will not be ready to report complete data on the eighth signup until about mid-June, he is announcing the pool maximum acceptable rental rates at this time to assist producers in making their planting decisions.

Under the CRP, participants sign contracts in which they agree to keep their land out of production and in a conserving use for 10 years. Annual rental payments compensate farmers for retiring highly erodible land and other eligible land from crop production for that period. Participants also

receive cost-share payments of up to 50 percent of the cost of establishing trees or grass on the acreage placed in the program.

More than 28-million acres have been enrolled in the CRP under contracts entered into during the first seven signups. The goal is to bring 40-45 million acres into the program by the end of 1990.

A ninth CRP signup is scheduled July 17 through Aug. 4. Producers wanting to offer land for acceptance into the CRP should contact their local Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service office.

The following table shows the maximum acceptable annual per acre rental rate by state and pool number.

State	Pool Number	Maximum Rate Acceptable (Dollars/Acre)	State	Pool Number	Maximum Rate Acceptable (Dollars/Acre)
Alabama	1	45.00	Kentucky	1	60.00
				2	70.00
Alaska	1&2	37.00		3	50.00
Arizona	1	40.00	Louisiana	1	45.00
Arkansas	1	50.00	Maine	1&2	50.00
California	1	50.00	Maryland	1	70.00
				2	85.00
Colorado	1	50.00			
	2	45.00	Massachusetts	1	50.00
	3	40.00			
Connecticut	1	50.00	Michigan	1	40.00
				2	60.00
Delaware	1	80.00		3	85.00
Florida	1	45.00	Minnesota	1	44.00
	2	40.00		2	30.00
				3	55.00
Georgia	1	45.00		4	45.00
				5	50.00
				6&7	70.00
Hawaii	1,2,3,4	80.00		8	85.00
				9	80.00

Idaho	1&2	50.00	Mississippi	1	45.00
	3	45.00			
	4	60.00			
Illinois	1	105.00	Missouri	1	65.00
	2	115.00		2	50.00
	3	85.00	Montana	1	35.00
	4	70.00		2	40.00
Indiana	1	85.00		3	45.00
	2	75.00	Nebraska	1	45.00
Iowa	1	80.00		2	52.00
	2	110.00		3	60.00
	3	90.00		4	70.00
	4	105.00			
	5	70.00	Nevada	1	40.00
Kansas	1	50.00	New Hampshire	1	50.00
	2	55.00	New Jersey	1	70.00
	3	65.00		2&3	60.00
	4	60.00	Utah	1	45.00
	1	40.00		2	40.00
New Mexico	1	40.00	Vermont	1	50.00
	1	60.00		1	70.00
N. Carolina	2	70.00		2	60.00
	1&2	45.00	Virginia	3	55.00
	3	50.00			
N. Dakota	1	35.00	Virgin Island	1	60.00
	2,3,4	40.00			
	5	47.00	Washington	1	50.00
Ohio	1	85.00		2&3	60.00
	2	65.00	West Virginia	1	60.00
Oklahoma	1	40.00			
	2	50.00	Wisconsin	1	30.00
	3&4	45.00		2	38.00
Oregon	1	65.00		3	50.00
	2&3	50.00		4	60.00
				5	65.00
				6	85.00

Pennsylvania	1	75.00		7	80.00
	2	65.00		8	90.00
	3	85.00			
			Wyoming	1	40.00
Puerto Rico	1	60.00		-	
Rhode Island	1	50.00			
S. Carolina	1,2,3	45.00			
S. Dakota	1	35.00			
	2	40.00			
	3&4	45.00			
	5	50.00			
	6	60.00			
Tennessee	1	60.00			
	2	55.00			
	3,4,5	50.00			
Texas	1&2	40.00			
	3	35.00			
	4,5,6	40.00			
	7	55.00			

Robert Feist (202) 447-6789

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## USDA SEEKS COMMENTS ON PROPOSAL TO REVISE SNAP BEAN STANDARDS

WASHINGTON, March 7—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is seeking public comment on a proposal to revise the U.S. standards for grades of snap beans to:

- tighten the requirements for snap beans graded U.S. Fancy, permitting fewer broken beans in products of that grade;
- slightly increase the number of broken beans allowed in the standards for U.S. No. 1 and U.S. No. 2 grades;
- define which types of beans may be given U.S. grades.

J. Patrick Boyle, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said the changes had been proposed by the South Florida Vegetable Exchange. The proponents claim their proposals reflect changes in production and harvesting practices, Boyle said.

AMS establishes grade standards and provides official grading for many



agricultural products. Use of the standards and grading service is voluntary or industry solicited and is paid for by the user.

The proposal will appear as a “request for public comment” in the March 8 Federal Register. Written comments, postmarked or courier-dated no later than May 8, may be sent to the Docket Clerk, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, P.O. Box 96456, Rm. 2085-S, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456.

Clarence Steinberg (202) 447-6179

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## **USDA PROPOSES NEW NET WEIGHT LABELING SYSTEM FOR MEAT, POULTRY PRODUCTS**

WASHINGTON, March 6—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is proposing new regulations to ensure correct net weight designations on meat and poultry products. Comments on the proposed changes will be accepted through May 4. “We are proposing changes in labeling to provide uniform net weight requirements by incorporating handbooks used by the National Conference on Weights and Measures,” said Dr. Lester M. Crawford, administrator of USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service.

Net weight generally can be defined as the edible contents of the package, not including the weight of the packaging. While individual packages may weigh slightly more or less than the actual statement on the label, the average weight must exceed or equal the declared net weight for each lot of products. “This proposal is designed to enhance the ability of federal, state, and local agencies to enforce strict net weight standards and to make our regulations more uniform with the Food and Drug Administration,” Crawford said. “The new proposal is a product of over three years’ work for FSIS, state and local officials, industry and consumer representatives.”

The National Conference on Weights and Measures has become the principal forum for developing consensus from all these groups on how to determine the net weight of meat and poultry products.

Under the proposed changes, two handbooks produced by the National Institute of Standards and Technology would be incorporated into the regulations for compliance testing of packages to make sure they are not underweight. The handbooks are National Bureau of Standards Handbook

133, which provides sampling plans to ensure compliance at the plant and retail levels, and National Bureau of Standards Handbook 44, which provides procedures and specifications for accurate weighing devices. The proposal calls for annual testing of weighing devices. Net weight definitions provided by the handbooks also would be adopted by FSIS.

The proposal enables state and local inspectors to use either “dry tare” or “wet tare” compliance testing methods. Dry tare, which FSIS uses and recommends, assumes the liquid seepage from the product in the packages is part of the product. In wet tare testing, the liquid that seeps from the product is not included with the product’s weight. A specific percentage of weight difference to account for moisture loss is provided in the regulations.

The proposal also provides for an agreement between state and federal officials that defines concurrent authority over products after they leave federal establishments. “Coordinating state and federal action should virtually eliminate problems encountered by industry, state and local officials when trying to ensure that products are labeled properly for net weight,” Crawford said.

The proposed rule is published in today’s March 6 Federal Register. Comments should be submitted by May 4 to: Policy Office, Attn. Linda Carey, FSIS Hearing Clerk, Room 3175-S, FSIS, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.

FSIS inspects meat and poultry to ensure that they are safe, wholesome and accurately labeled.

Richard Bryant (202) 447-9113

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## **USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET RICE PRICES**

WASHINGTON, March 7—Acting Under Secretary of Agriculture Richard W. Goldberg today announced the prevailing world market prices of milled rice, loan rate basis, as follows:

- long grain whole kernels, 10.11 cents per pound;
- medium grain whole kernels, 9.46 cents per pound;
- short grain whole kernels, 9.38 cents per pound;
- broken kernels, 5.06 cents per pound.

Minimum loan repayment rates for 1987 crop loans are the higher of



the world price or 50 percent of the loan rate. For 1988 crop rice, the minimum repayment rates are the higher of the world price or 60 percent of the loan rate.

Based upon these prevailing world market prices for milled rice, rough rice world prices are estimated to be:

- long grain, \$6.25 per hundredweight;
- medium grain, \$5.92 per hundredweight;
- short grain, \$5.64 per hundredweight.

The prices announced are effective today at 3:00 P.M. EST. The next scheduled price announcement will be made March 14 at 3:00 P.M. EST, although prices may be announced sooner if warranted.

Gene Rosera (202) 447-5954

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## **USDA OFFERS ONLINE INFORMATION ON AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL TRANSPORTATION**

WASHINGTON, March 8—An expanded computerized service offering information about agricultural and rural transportation matters is now available from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The expanded service, from USDA's Office of Transportation, makes information on a wide variety of transportation matters available electronically to subscribers, said Martin "Buzz" Fitzpatrick, Jr., OT administrator.

"The information is categorized in six areas," he said. "The first is announcements, which covers notices of press releases and upcoming events and reports of OT weekly activities. The domestic, international and rural transportation categories, contain information and brief descriptions of OT publications on these subjects.

"Transport technology contains information on packaging and handling," Fitzpatrick said. "The tabular data section is being developed. When completed it will contain statistical information on agricultural transportation matters, such as grain shipments by barge on the Mississippi River and data on rural roads and bridges.

"We want the public to have access to as much USDA information as possible—as quickly as possible—and with a minimum of effort," Fitzpatrick said.

The OT information can be accessed by personal computers and word processors equipped with a modem. While intended primarily for retailers of information, it is available to subscribers anywhere in the world moments after release.

The agricultural and rural transportation information is available through a computerized information service called EDI, which offers USDA press releases, crop and livestock reports and a host of other economic and statistical reports in addition to data bases containing news on human and animal nutrition, new agricultural products, soil and water conservation and other USDA reports and releases.

The information also is available on USDA Online, a secondary computer information service operated by USDA. For further information, contact Russell Forte, Special Programs Division, Office of Information, USDA, Washington D.C. 20250; telephone: (202) 447-5505.

Larry Mark (202) 447-3977

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## **USDA EXTENDS COMMENT PERIOD ON PROPOSED REVISIONS IN SHILOT INSPECTION PLAN**

WASHINGTON, March 9—The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Federal Grain Inspection Service has extended until May 23 the comment period on its proposal to revise the cumulative sum (Cu-Sum) method of the FGIS Shilot Inspection Plan.

The proposed changes include revising starting and breakpoint values, limiting the number of field reviews of original inspection results, averaging original and reinspection results, and redefining material portion.

The original proposal was published Feb. 27 in the Federal Register. Comments may be submitted no later than May 28 to Lewis Lebakken Jr., USDA, FGIS, P.O. Box 96454, Room 0632-S, Washington, D.C. 20090-6454; telephone (202) 475-3428; telecopier (202) 447-4628.

Comments will be available for public inspection in Room 0628-S of USDA's South Building, 1400 Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C., during regular business hours.

Allen A. Atwood, (202) 475-3367.

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## **USDA EXTENDS COMMENT PERIOD ON PROPOSAL TO EXPAND NPPI**

WASHINGTON, March 8—The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced today that it is reopening and extending the comment period for a proposal to expand the National Poultry Improvement Plan. “The proposal includes a new U.S. Sanitation-Monitored Turkey program to reduce Salmonella levels in turkey flocks and products,” said James W. Glosser, administrator of USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. “Also proposed are amendments that would enhance the plan’s monitoring and testing procedures, and keep it up to date with the latest poultry disease technologies,” he said.

Consideration will be given only to written comments that are postmarked or received on or before April 7.

Send an original and two copies of written comments to Helene R. Wright, Chief, Regulatory Analysis and Development, APHIS, USDA, Room 866 Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, MD. 20782. Refer to docket number 86-110. Comments may be reviewed at USDA, 14th and Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 1141-S, between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays.

For further information contact Dr. I. L. Peterson, Sheep, Goat, Equine and Poultry Diseases Staff, VS, APHIS, USDA, Room 771 Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, Md. 20782; telephone (301) 436-7768.

Janna Evans (301) 436-7251

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## **USDA PROPOSES AMENDING PESTICIDE REGULATIONS FOR IMPORTED TOBACCOS**

WASHINGTON, March 9—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is proposing changes in the inspection program for imported flue-cured and burley tobacco.

J. Patrick Boyle, administrator of USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service, said the changes include expanding the number of chemicals in the list of prohibited pesticides, revising the maximum concentration of residues in imported tobacco, and prohibiting imported tobacco from leaving their points of entry prior to passing USDA inspection.

A fourth change would refine a definition, substituting the term “prohibited pesticide residue” for the term “banned pesticide” in the regulations, Boyle said.

USDA seeks the amendments to prevent imported flue-cured and burley tobacco with unacceptable levels of pesticide residues from entering the domestic market, and to make language in the regulations conform to the pertinent language of other national and international documents, Boyle said. “These changes are in accordance with our ongoing efforts to provide the most effective program possible for the public and the tobacco industry. The proposed changes will make the regulations more consistent with the law,” Boyle said.

Provisions in the Food Security Act of 1985 require that flue-cured and burley tobacco be certified as not containing pesticide levels prohibited under the 1947 Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act.

The changes will appear as a proposed rule in the March 9 Federal Register. Comments, postmarked no later than April 7, may be sent to the Director, Tobacco Division, AMS, USDA, Room 502 Annex Building, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456. Comments will be available for public inspection at this location during regular business hours until May 12.

Clarence Steinberg (202) 447-6179

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